

Valuing Volunteers in 2013 and Beyond

An updated Volunteering Strategy for the Volunteering Sectors in Worcestershire



*Prepared for the Volunteering Theme Group of the Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI)
project in Worcestershire*

VITAL – Valuing Infrastructure, Training & Accountable Leadership

Worcestershire Volunteering Strategy 2013

Foreword

Volunteering helps build social capital and community cohesion as well as having a vital role in the delivery of key services. Volunteering is also good for the volunteer – helping to improve health and well-being and providing opportunities for individuals to acquire skills and knowledge that may enhance career development or employment prospects. Volunteering is an essential component of the economic and social fabric of a successful community, and Worcestershire has a strong and vibrant volunteer-involving sector. To ensure that this remains the case in the county, it is an opportune time to build on the foundations of previous work and reinforce some key principles to underpin the development of volunteering over the coming years.

Without discarding the valuable content of the earlier strategies, this revision aims to reflect the changing environment, recognising the constraints the volunteering sector is under as well as the opportunities available to highlight the positive impact that volunteering can provide. It has been informed by the research and pilot studies undertaken as part of the Valuing Infrastructure, Training & Accountable Leadership (VITAL) project funded by TLI, which have explored ways of engaging hard-to-reach volunteers, developed models to capture the wider benefits of volunteering and facilitated the business sector to meet their corporate social responsibility through supporting and developing local communities.

The report covers the principles of volunteering, some definitions of volunteering infrastructure motivations for volunteering as well as benefits and challenges before presenting some recommendations in the form of aspirations to address these issues. The intention is that this strategy will achieve the first objective of the National Compact¹ – a strong, diverse and independent civil society – by providing a framework in which volunteering is highly valued and well resourced, with consistent quality standards and effective management to provide social and economic benefits throughout the county.

Kate Walton
On behalf of VITAL Volunteering Theme Group
August 2013

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to colleagues in the accredited Volunteer Centres throughout Worcestershire who have supported and contributed to this review

¹ National Compact, December 2010

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Executive Summary

The first Volunteering Strategy for Worcestershire was written in June 2006 by the Volunteering Hub of Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium; its objectives and overall aims were developed in partnership and consultation with volunteer managers working in a wide range of voluntary organisations and groups in Worcestershire. A Volunteering Code of Practice was produced as a practical accompaniment to the strategic aims; the Code contains good practice tips and ideas, guidelines and proposals for volunteer involving organisations from all sectors to use and adapt to their own needs.

Whilst the principles expressed within the original strategies remain relevant, the landscape for the voluntary sector in general and volunteering in particular has seen significant changes in recent years.

The economic climate has placed enormous pressures on traditional sources of funding and there is now a greater emphasis on sustainability through collaborative and partnership working, requiring some creative solutions to ensure service delivery can be maintained. The core values of volunteering - choice, diversity, mutual benefit and recognition – remain constant, and to some extent the challenges are predictable, but the impact of external pressures has seen an increase in the demand for volunteering at the same time as a decrease in resources.

Nationally, the challenges which need to be addressed have been recognised² as:

1. Volunteering is becoming more professional
2. The ageing population
3. A time-poor society
4. Weaker ties to geographical communities
5. A consumer culture
6. Changing ideas about volunteering

A local research project³ commissioned by Worcestershire Voices and supported by Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils illustrates the scale and benefits of volunteering within the county and through its consultation exercises has also reflected the local perception of challenges; these can be summarised as an awareness that volunteering activity is not free, an increase in demand for volunteering driven by policy changes, and a lack of investment to support higher levels of volunteer involvement.

² NCVO Third Sector Foresight – Future Focus 2

³ Worcestershire Volunteering Research Report 2013

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To meet these challenges, the strategy recommends adoption of 6 goals, each with targeted activity to achieve the objectives.

- **Worcestershire will raise the profile of volunteering**
- **Worcestershire will be a place which fully values its volunteers and their contribution.**
- **Worcestershire will support volunteer – involving organisations to access services which ensure best use of resources**
- **Worcestershire will have a range of good quality and diverse volunteering opportunities accessible to people across the county**
- **Worcestershire will offer a high standard of volunteering experience for people who volunteer**
- **Worcestershire will recognise the contribution of volunteering in addressing strategic priorities such as improving skills**

The key to the success of the strategy will be the individual and collective engagement of infrastructure and other volunteer-using organisations to support these principles and in maximising the impact of the activities which underpin them.

The volunteer charter is a critical element in raising the profile of volunteering. It is firmly rooted in the Code of Practice which was developed as part of the previous Compact consultations and is closely aligned to the agreement reached between Volunteering England and the Trades Union Congress to provide good practice guidance for all organisations using volunteers to deliver or support their services.

The volunteer charter could be further strengthened by the development of a Kitemark as a quality standard for Worcestershire volunteers and voluntary organisations. This requires careful consideration as there may be significant resource implications as well as issues of liability and responsibility, and it is for this reason that the proposal is couched in terms of an initial feasibility study.

This strategy has been prepared as part of the Transforming Local Infrastructure project, in which volunteering has been one of three main strands of work, alongside leadership and sustainable development. Establishing the Worcestershire Voices website as a central point of information for third sector organisations has provided an invaluable resource for Worcestershire Strategic Board (Voices) to raise the standard of representation and consultation within the sector. It is therefore appropriate that Worcestershire Strategic Board, with its reach and influence across the voluntary sector, its relationship with statutory partners and contacts with the business sector, should be presented with an opportunity to consider, develop and endorse this strategy, which has the potential to provide a cohesive volunteering ethos in Worcestershire.

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Introduction

Volunteering has embraced many changes and developments, and may even have adopted a new vocabulary, since the first strategy was written in June 2006. However nothing has materially altered the essence of volunteering, therefore this strategy has retained its references to the original nationally accepted definitions relating to volunteering.

Definition of volunteering used for the purpose of this strategy⁴:

“Volunteering is an activity that involves the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. For the purposes of the Compact, this commitment refers to people volunteering with recognised community groups and/or voluntary organisations.”

Principles of Volunteering⁵

These are the core values which serve to complement the basic definition above and to illustrate its practical application and interpretation.

Choice Whether to volunteer should be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity Volunteering should be open to all no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Mutual benefit Volunteering is about identifying the benefits for the volunteer *and* the organisation. Benefits should include not only a sense of achievement, sociability and fun, but also experience, skills and training.

Recognition An organisation should explicitly recognise the value of what volunteers can and do offer not just to their organisation, but to the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

Volunteering Infrastructure

“**Volunteering infrastructure** exists to encourage people to volunteer, to make the process of engaging in volunteering as easy as possible and to ensure that the quality of the volunteering experience is as good as it can be.

Volunteering infrastructure is defined as ‘organisations and services that exist to encourage people to volunteer for other agencies (whether they are in the community, voluntary, public or

⁴ Salford Compact – Volunteering Code of Good Practice

⁵ Worcestershire / National Compact

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private sectors), to support these agencies in the development of high quality volunteering programmes”⁶

Voluntary and community sector infrastructure is, by its very nature, organisationally focused. However, **volunteering infrastructure** is unusual, especially at a local level, in that the primary audience is the individual (whether they be an existing or a potential volunteer), and organisational development is supported to improve the quality and quantity of volunteering.⁷

Why do people volunteer?

Within the adopted definition of volunteering there is an inherent classification of a volunteer as an individual who commits time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. However, this does not begin to explain why people volunteer, but identifying their motivation provides the key to a good volunteering experience. Most are covered by the following reasons:

- Altruism (giving something back, helping others, feeling valued)
- Personal and social reasons
- Developing skills and employability
- Changing the world
- Having a voice

Who gains from volunteering?

There are three significant areas of benefit from volunteering: individuals; organisations; community. Individual beneficiaries include the volunteers who make a commitment to an organisation for one or more of the reasons identified above, and service users of those front-line delivery organisations. Organisational beneficiaries include the volunteer-involving organisations, whether voluntary or statutory, as well as private sector companies through employee volunteering schemes. The wider community benefit revolves around the social impact of the volunteering activity, and its contribution towards stronger community cohesion and development. The following examples of typical volunteering activity, though not an exhaustive list, illustrate how these benefits may be achieved:

- Helping provide a service within a voluntary or community organisation, or the public sector.
- Community activism, campaigning or action to change society, develop public policy or identify and tackle unmet needs.
- Befriending and mentoring.
- Organising sports and physical recreation.
- Managing a voluntary or community organisation as a trustee or member of a board or committee.
- As a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance, for instance serving as a school governor or a community representative

⁶ National Compact – Volunteering Code of Good Practice

⁷ Building on Success

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- Leading or taking part in activity providing a community service, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest.
- Volunteering overseas.
- Helping raise funds for an organisation.

What challenges face volunteering?

From the national perspective, a report by NCVO in its Future Focus series⁸ identified six challenges which the sector must address when it posed the question: What will our volunteers be like in 5 years' time?

1. Volunteering is becoming more professional
Indicators include the increase in staff who are paid to manage volunteers; formal volunteer role descriptions or personalised volunteer programmes; the publication of National Occupational Standards for managing volunteers.
2. The ageing population
As the UK population ages, and birth rates fall, the ratio of dependents to employed citizens rises. By 2031, a quarter of Britain's population will be of pensionable age
3. Time-poor society
A working culture that encourages long hours, careers demanding a high level of commitment, and higher expectations of levels of income and leisure time, frequently leaves people with little spare time or energy. Research cites lack of time as the biggest barrier to participation
4. Weaker ties to geographical communities
Changes to the economy and the labour market have led to people travelling further and more frequently, and relocating more often, causing a shift from traditional geographical communities.
5. Consumer culture
As society grows more affluent, people have become more used to a transaction culture, expecting something in exchange for their personal time, effort and commitment. Widely accessible global travel and the growing market for gift experiences offers a greater variety of new experiences, meeting higher expectations for quality of life
6. Changing ideas about volunteering
Volunteering has always had an intrinsic value and been seen as a positive activity in itself, but recent public and political discussions present volunteering as a solution to social problems, fears of declining social responsibility, the breakdown of communities and the falling engagement in formal politics.

An additional layer to this last challenge is the pressure on public finances arising from the global economic downturn, and the impact this has had on public services. The rhetoric about the Big Society coupled with the Localism agenda have engendered an expectation that volunteers will fill the gaps arising from cutbacks in statutory services, replacing rather than adding value to those services.

⁸ NCVO Third Sector Foresight: Future Focus 2

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A more local insight is provided by a recent report⁹ commissioned by Worcestershire Voices, the strategic body for the voluntary and community sector. Whilst the statistical sample was not huge, it presents a profile of volunteering in Worcestershire in 2013, with its findings drawn from desk research, surveys, stakeholder interviews and focus groups. The random selection below contained few surprises:

- The household survey of 300+ adults found that 69% volunteer in some way, with just over half engaged in formal volunteering; across all sectors, 95% have positive perceptions of volunteering
- “Volunteering can provide a ‘heart’ to the community”
- 49% said it enabled them to make new friends (60% of respondents over 60); 56% said volunteering made them feel good about themselves; 64% said it added valuable experience to their CVs
- 66 organisations (36% of the sample) working in the fields of health, care, disability and special needs mobilised over 150000 volunteers
- People often aren’t aware of the costs involved in managing volunteers and brokering placements.....the hidden costs include publicity, training, support and supervision, expenses, health and safety, insurance, CRB/DBS checks, management and co-ordination
- Volunteering is growing across all sectors. Of the county’s 2750 VCS organisations, many are experiencing increased service demand in a significantly reduced funding environment.
- An estimated 77,000 new volunteers will be needed in the year ahead
- Policy changes around Localism, Social Value, and Health & Social Care rely on a considerable “scaling up” of volunteering in communities. However there has been little or no investment to support this.

Why a revised Worcestershire Volunteering Strategy?

Financial resources and other support including statutory endorsement enabled the development and implementation of previous strategies, but the changing landscape has resulted in funding and other resources being scarce. In April 2012, Worcestershire County Council changed its policy on Infrastructure Support for VCS organisations and concentrated its resources within the Changing Futures Fund which makes a range of organisational support and development packages available through approved providers. Volunteering is not included in the services offered and no alternative resources have been made available, yet there has been a continuous demand for volunteers, and this is set to continue. Despite restricted resources, great efforts have been made to meet the demand for volunteer recruitment, in particular by the network of accredited Volunteer Centres, but further action is required to ensure the sustainability of this and other, complementary services. A revised strategy will provide a framework in which leaders within the volunteering sector in Worcestershire – voluntary, community, statutory and private - recognise the value of volunteering, especially its contribution to the social and economic well-being of the community at large, respond to

⁹ Worcestershire Volunteering Research Report 2013

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known and emerging challenges, and work together to support effective volunteering, which is accessible to all.

“Volunteering has to be underpinned and supported by investment if it is to flourish in communities and across our society. Above all else, it needs investment in the creation of new and exciting opportunities which capture the imagination and sense of what’s possible for potential volunteers.

If we really want to increase the giving of time within our society, if we are serious about keeping the promise of a London 2012 legacy, it is crucial our society invests now in the local support services that help make volunteering happen.”

(John Carlin, Volunteer Quality Manager at NCVO)

How can this be achieved?

The Worcestershire Volunteering Research report contains recommendations for 3 key stakeholders, namely Worcestershire Voices, the public sector and organisations with volunteers. There is a degree of synergy between the recommendations which suggests that much can be achieved if there is a common purpose and a shared vision adopted by all stakeholders, with core values for volunteering being accepted and implemented, as envisaged by the first Volunteering Code of Practice. Six key objectives have been identified to address many of the challenges we face, and by adopting a collaborative approach, where individual organisations contribute to at least one of the shared goals, we can maximise the impact for the benefit of the whole community.



Worcestershire will raise the profile of volunteering

- The Worcestershire Voices and Marketplace Website will include a single point of access for information about volunteering in the county; it will also provide information about volunteering opportunities through links to individual accredited Volunteer Centres and to the well-established Do-it website, where 70% of the available opportunities are uploaded by Volunteer Centres
- The Volunteer Centres named in Appendix 1 received accreditation in 2011 as a partnership, and are therefore entitled to use the VCQA brand logo for the county. Wherever possible, this county-wide brand will be adopted and will be the focal point of volunteering information on the website

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Worcestershire will be a place which fully values its volunteers and their contribution.

- All organisations adopt a Volunteer Management Charter¹⁰, covering the 10 key principles of volunteering
- Investment in supporting the growth and development of volunteering is essential; London 2012 is rightly hailed as a great success and is an excellent example of what can be achieved by a well-resourced volunteer programme

Worcestershire will support volunteer – involving organisations to access services which ensure best use of resources

- The Worcestershire Voices Marketplace website will provide links to a range of locally based support for back-office services and volunteer management including recruitment, promotion, training and other identified needs, enabling organisations to focus on front-line delivery
- A simple template to capture the social impact of volunteering opportunities will be adopted by organisations providing centralised promotion and marketing services

Worcestershire will have a range of good quality and diverse volunteering opportunities accessible to people across the county

- A new scheme to promote micro volunteering - **Flying Squad** – will offer more flexibility for volunteers with limited availability; as well as advertising one-off opportunities the scheme will collate a calendar of regular events such as Race for Life
- A series of briefings will be developed to illustrate and promote opportunities for private sector organisations to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility through employee volunteering schemes

Worcestershire will offer a high standard of volunteering experience for people who volunteer

- Local infrastructure organisations or partnerships will develop networks and forums to support volunteer managers
- A study should be undertaken to investigate the feasibility and costs of implementing a Worcestershire “Kite mark” as a quality standard for volunteer-involving organisations and may also be used to identify training and development needs

Worcestershire will recognise the contribution of volunteering in addressing strategic priorities such as improving skills

- Worcestershire Voices will endorse the recommendations of the research report
- A simple assessment model will be adopted to measure the benefits of volunteering on skills, well-being and other identified factors for individual volunteers

¹⁰ Appendix 2 – Volunteer Management Charter

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Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that the Worcestershire Volunteering Strategy will make a difference we recommend that it is presented to Worcestershire Voices for consideration and adoption, and that it is actively promoted on the Voices website

References

- Building on Success – Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England 2004-2014, *Volunteering England, 2004*
- Growing a strong and dynamic voluntary and community sector, ten year strategy 2006-2016, *Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium, 2006*
- Future Focus 2, Third Sector Foresight – NCVO
- Local Compact, Implementation Workbook – Winning the Deal by Paul Barasi, *NCVO 2006*
- The State of Volunteering in the Sub Region of Worcestershire’, a report for Volunteering England, written by Kate Walton (Pershore Volunteer Centre) *on behalf of the WIC Volunteering Hub, March 2007*
- Valuing Volunteers – A Strategy for Worcestershire *Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium Volunteer Hub June 2006*
- Volunteering Strategy – Salford
- Volunteering Code of Good Practice, *Compact Working Group and Active Community Unit*
- Worcestershire Compact ‘Let’s Do It Smarter’, *Worcestershire Partnership, 2006*
- Worcestershire Compact – Volunteering Code of Practice, *Worcestershire Partnership, 2007*
- Worcestershire Volunteering Summary Research Report – *S Basker Consulting, July 2013*

Further information

Compact

National

www.compactvoice.org

Worcestershire

www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk

Volunteering

www.volunteering.org.uk

www.do-it.org.uk

www.vinspired.com

www.csv-rsvp.org.uk

www.reachskills.org.uk

www.ivr.org.uk

For anyone who works with or manages volunteers

If you want a volunteering opportunity in your local area

Specifically aimed at young volunteers (16-25)

Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme for over 50s

Recruitment specialists for skilled or professional volunteers

Research & consultancy specialists on volunteering issues

Appendix 1

Volunteering infrastructure support available in Worcestershire

Infrastructure organisations can be defined as¹¹:

“The physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that help frontline organisations and community groups to achieve their aims.”

Voluntary and community sector infrastructure is, by its very nature, organisationally focused. However, **volunteering infrastructure** is unusual, especially at a local level, in that the primary audience is the individual (whether they be an existing or a potential volunteer), and organisational development is supported to improve the quality and quantity of volunteering.¹²



Worcestershire Volunteering Infrastructure – Volunteer Centres and other Volunteering Development Agencies that are part of the local infrastructure agencies in

Worcestershire. These are based in the following areas: Malvern, Redditch and Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest, Worcester City, and Wychavon (in Evesham, Droitwich and Pershore). All are accredited and deliver six nationally agreed volunteer development functions.

Differing operating methods exist in each area, but all operate according to the same quality system established by the national umbrella organisation, Volunteering England which is now part of NCVO. All partners have adopted standardised procedures for the Brokerage and Marketing Volunteering functions but services are restricted by limited resources in some cases.

The nationally recognised and locally defined core functions of volunteering infrastructure are:

- **Brokerage**

Matching up people interested in volunteering with opportunities and/or volunteer- involving organisations

Local Interpretation

- Informing members of the community interested in volunteering on volunteering in general and specific volunteering opportunities
- Matching up people interested in volunteering with opportunities and/or volunteer- involving organisations

- **Marketing volunteering**

Promoting volunteering and community involvement as well as specific volunteering opportunities

Local Interpretation

¹¹ Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium - 10 year strategy 2006 – 2016

¹² Building on Success

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- Promoting volunteering and community involvement at community events, forums, national events (Volunteers Week, Make a Difference Day, etc)
- Promotion of volunteering opportunities on behalf of volunteer involving organisations, using on-line facilities (Vbase), the media, promotional materials, in house databases

• **Good practice development**

A commitment to promoting good practice in working with volunteers to all volunteer-involving organisations, and actively supporting and maintaining this

Local Interpretation

- Actively supporting, maintaining and improving good practice in working with volunteers via facilitation of opportunities to share experiences, improve co-operative working, learning and stimulating discussion
- Development of good practice materials, guidelines and supporting documents, and promotion of these materials to all volunteer-involving organisations

• **Developing volunteering opportunities**

Developing innovative volunteering opportunities for potential volunteers, ensuring that opportunities are available for all

Local Interpretation

- Identifying gaps in volunteering opportunities and the need for specific opportunities
- Develop innovative volunteering opportunities for potential volunteers, to fill the gaps and satisfy the need for specific opportunities, ensuring that opportunities are available for all
- Support new or existing groups to develop their (new) volunteering opportunities

• **Policy response and campaigning**

Influencing policy development which takes account of the ways this may affect volunteers and volunteering activities.

Local Interpretation

- Consultation at community level on issues that may affect volunteering / volunteers to influence policy development, via local lobbying and campaigning where necessary
- Initiate a campaign if a policy development or change in policy may affect volunteering / volunteers and a response is not taken into account

• **Strategic development of volunteering**

Taking strategic responsibility for the support and development of local volunteer-involving organisations and networks, good practice development, and support for the development of local policy that facilitates volunteering

Local Interpretation

- Taking strategic responsibility for the support and development of local volunteer-involving organisations and networks and the promotion of good practice development,
- Taking strategic responsibility for the support of local policy development that facilitates volunteering, including championing the local Volunteering strategy
- Facilitating and initiating consultation on volunteering issues and providing a voice for the volunteering sector, via (facilitating) representation

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Volunteering Infrastructure – VCQA Accredited Centres as at July 2011

Bromsgrove & Redditch Network (BARN)

Community House, 103 Easemore Rd,
Redditch B98 8EY

T: 01527 60282

E: volunteer@barn.org.uk

W: www.barn.org.uk

Community Action Malvern & District ¹³

28-30 Belle Vue Terrace,
Malvern WR14 4PZ

T: 01684 892381

E: info@communityaction.org.uk

W: www.communityaction.org.uk

Community Action Wyre Forest

Unit 3, The Ashlane Centre, Worcester Road,
Kidderminster, DY10 1JR

T: 01562 862757

E: cvs@communityactionwf.org.uk

W: www.communityactionwf.org.uk

Evesham Volunteer Centre

The Lodge, Rear of Dresden House, Brick Kiln St
Evesham WR11 4AA

T: 01386 40165

E: co@eveshamvolunteers.org.uk

W: www.eveshamvolunteers.org.uk

Pershore Volunteer Centre

1 Billing House, Cherry Orchard
Pershore WR10 1EY

T: 01386 554299

E: admin@pershorevolunteers.org

W: www.pershorevolunteers.org

Worcester Volunteer Centre

33 The Tything
Worcester WR1 1JL

T: 01905 24741

E: ann@wvc.org.uk

W:

www.worcestervolunteercentre.org.uk

Droitwich Spa & Rural Council for Voluntary Services

65 Omberlsey Street East,
Droitwich Spa WR9 8QS

T: 01905 779115

E: carolp@droitwichcvs.org.uk

W: www.droitwichcvs.org.uk

¹³ Community Action Malvern & District does not currently offer a volunteer recruitment service. General support is available by phone or email from other partners, or alternatively local information is available from the Worcestershire Hub 01684 862151 or email malvernhillsvolunteering@yahoo.co.uk

Appendix 2 Volunteer Management Charter

1. **Equality & Diversity**
 - Volunteering is open to all; volunteers are treated with fairness
2. **Expenses**
 - Travel, and any other agreed, out of pocket expenses are reimbursed
3. **Induction**
 - Volunteers are introduced to the work and ethos of the organisation
4. **Organisational Involvement**
 - Volunteers have influence and an informed voice on organisational issues
5. **Personal Development**
 - Identified needs are met by relevant training and development opportunities
6. **Recruitment Process**
 - Recruitment procedures are fair, efficient and consistent
7. **Resolving Difficulties**
 - Volunteers are aware of how to raise a concern and how it will be handled
8. **Reward & Recognition**
 - The organisation expresses its appreciation of the volunteers' contribution
9. **Safe Environment**
 - The physical and emotional risks of volunteering are identified, minimised and covered by adequate insurance
10. **Support**
 - A named supervisor ensures ongoing support appropriate to need